



Patient & Family Guide

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Right Heart Catheterization Test

Halifax Infirmary

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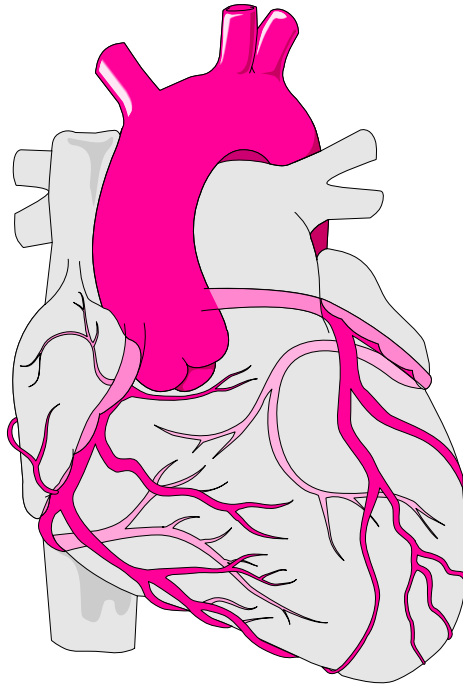
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Right Heart Catheterization Test

What is a right heart catheterization test?

This is a test to find out how well your heart muscle is working. Your cardiologist (heart doctor) will check the blood pressure on the right side of your heart. We may also take blood samples to measure the amount of oxygen in your heart.

This test will help your cardiologist find the cause of your heart problem and recommend treatment.



How do I get ready for this test?

- You will visit your cardiologist (heart doctor) before your test. They will examine you, explain the test, and ask you to sign a consent form.
- You may have some routine blood samples taken. You may need to have an ECG/EKG (electrocardiogram) if you have not had one recently.

Can I take my usual medications before the test?

- Your cardiologist will go over your medication(s) with you. You may take **most** of your usual medications on the day of the test. Sometimes, certain medications should not be taken before this test.
- If you take a blood thinner (like warfarin, dabigatran, apixaban, rivaroxaban, or edoxaban), your cardiologist may want you to:
 - › stop taking it several days before the test.
 - › change it to a form of low molecular weight heparin (like Fragmin®).
- Usually, you can take aspirin (ASA) and clopidogrel (Plavix®) as usual.

Can I eat and drink before the test?

Yes. You can eat and drink as usual on the day before and on the day of your test.

How is a right heart catheterization test done?

Your test will be done in the Cardiac Catheterization Lab on Level 6 at the Halifax Infirmary.

- You will be asked to change into a hospital gown. Please take off any jewelry, underwear, and socks.
- You may wear your glasses, dentures, and hearing aid(s), if needed.
- You will be asked to pee just before your test.
- You will wait in the recovery area until the team is ready for you in the catheterization room.
- You will be taken to the catheterization room by a nurse. They will help you onto a hard, narrow table.
- The room will be cool. Please tell the nurse if you would like a blanket.
- You will see special X-ray equipment and monitors.
- Small, sticky patches will be placed on your chest and attached to a heart monitor.

- We will shave a small area on your neck or groin and wash it with a cold liquid.
- We will place clean sheets over your body.
- The cardiologist will freeze the area on your neck or groin to prevent you from feeling any pain.
- Small catheters (tubes) will be passed through a vein to the right side of your heart. You may be asked to take a deep breath to help move each catheter.
- The cardiologist will measure the blood pressure in your heart and take blood samples. They may also take a biopsy (small piece of tissue) from your heart. If this is needed, your cardiologist will talk about it with you first.
- The test will take about 30 to 60 minutes.

What are the risks of this test?

This procedure is safe and usually well tolerated, but there are some risks.

- There may be bleeding at the puncture site (where the catheter was put in), with pain and bruising.
 - › Usually, the bleeding is minor and the pain at the puncture site goes away within a day.
 - › If you have more bleeding, the nurse or cardiologist may need to compress (press on) the puncture site longer.
- You may have extra heartbeats or palpitations (a fast heartbeat) when the catheter is placed in your heart. You may feel these palpitations during the test. It is very rare that this causes any problems.
- The risk of serious complications is very rare (less than 1%), but your cardiologist will talk about the risks with you before the test.

How long will I be in bed after the test?

After your test, a nurse will tell you how long you have to stay in bed.

If a vein in your neck was used:

- You **do not** need to stay in bed.
- You must stay in the recovery area for about 20 minutes. The nurse will check your blood pressure and check the puncture site for any bleeding.

If a vein in your groin was used:

- **You must stay flat in bed for at least 1 hour.** This will give the puncture site time to heal and prevent bleeding. Your nurse will tell you how long you need to stay flat in bed.
- **Do not** lift your head off the pillow. You may turn your head from side to side. Ask your nurse if you would like the head of the bed raised up slightly.
- **Do not** put your elbows above your shoulders or your arms behind your head.
- **Do not** cross your legs or bend your knees. You may wiggle your toes and bend your feet.

How can I prevent bleeding from the puncture site in my groin?

- For the next 48 hours (2 days), press gently on the puncture site when you laugh, cough, sneeze, or go to the bathroom.
- Blood may flow from the puncture site (bleeding), or stay under the skin in a firm lump. This lump may range in size from a walnut to a golf ball, or bigger.
- If you see bleeding or a lump that is getting bigger while you are in the hospital:
 - › Apply firm pressure with your hand to the site, go back to bed, and ring for the nurse.
- If you have bleeding or a lump that is getting bigger after you leave the hospital:
 - › Lie on your back and apply firm pressure until the bleeding stops or the lump gets smaller. You may need a loved one to help you with this.
 - › **If the lump does not get softer after applying pressure for 5 minutes, see your primary health care provider.**
- **If you are not able to stop the bleeding, or the lump keeps getting bigger, call 911 to take you to the nearest Emergency Department.**

When will I be discharged from the hospital?

- **If you are an inpatient** (staying in the hospital overnight), talk with your nurse about your discharge plan.
- **If you are an outpatient:**
 - › If a vein in your neck was used for the test, you will be discharged about 20 minutes after your test.
 - › If a vein in your groin was used, you will be discharged about 2 hours after your test.
- **It is recommended that a responsible adult come to the Cardiac Catheterization Lab to take you home.** It is important to have someone with you for the first few hours after discharge, in case you have bleeding and need help.

When can I take a bath?

- You may shower the morning after your test.
- **Do not** point the shower stream right at the puncture site.
- **Do not** take a bath or swim in a pool for 48 hours.

When can I take off my bandage?

You can take off the bandage the next evening.

When can I drive?

- **If you are an inpatient**, ask your cardiologist when you can drive.
- **If you are an outpatient**, ask your cardiologist if you received sedation (medication to help you relax) during this test.
- **If you received sedation**, a responsible adult must drive you home.
- **Do not** drive a car or operate machinery for 24 hours (1 day) after you receive sedation.

When can I exercise?

- **If a vein in your neck was used**, you can exercise right away.
- **If a vein in your groin was used:**
 - › Take your time climbing stairs.
 - › **Do not** walk too fast.
 - › **Do not** do any rough sports (like jogging or tennis) for 3 days after your test.
 - › Avoid bending, squatting, and heavy lifting for at least 2 days after your test.

When can I go back to work?

Ask your cardiologist when you can go back to work. The kind of work you do will help your cardiologist decide when you can go back to work.

Call 911 to take you to the nearest Emergency Department if you:

- › are not able to stop bleeding at the puncture site.
- › have intense (strong) pain at the puncture site.
- › have severe (very bad) chest pain or pressure, or trouble breathing.

Talk to your primary health care provider (family doctor or nurse practitioner) if you:

- › have a fever (temperature above 38 °C/100.4 °F) or chills.
- › see pus (a thick, yellowish or greenish liquid that you cannot see through) at the puncture site.
- › notice a firm lump at the puncture site that does not get softer after applying pressure for 5 minutes.

